

ment to Naples. Every day as he left the base at Great Lakes, he pulled over and took off his helmet and vest because "everyone else did it." He thought gear was required only on base.

The supervisor confirmed the E-4's pullover site was right outside the gate, which meant security personnel, as well as people in leadership roles (e.g., officers and chiefs), could see what was happening. Yet, none of them did anything about it, and some of them probably even joined the E-4 every day in taking off their riding gear. So, where was the leadership?

The E-4 said he figured because it was OK to remove his gear in Illinois (a helmet-optional state), it was OK to do the same thing in Italy. According to his Naples supervisor, the E-4 was "in shock" when he read the part of the OpNav instruction—in italics—that says what he was doing is punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. He was counseled and told if he was seen again without proper riding gear he would be taken to captain's mast. Did the E-4's problem stem from not listening to what was said during the riding course he took, or did he just choose to ignore the rules? No one but him really knows.

My concern is that people in leadership positions aren't setting the right example for their junior personnel by enforcing orders—in this case, OpNav Instruction 5100.12G. I would think military personnel have shed enough blood on our nation's highways to convince them that they really aren't invincible.

I've heard all the reasons for not wearing full riding gear. The problem with those reasons is they don't address that one time the other driver or rider doesn't see you, sand or pebbles suddenly appear on the roadway, or oil drips from the car ahead of you. Without all your protective gear in those situations, you may be in trouble.


Let me leave you with one final thought. Numerous meetings have been held concerning what to do about motorcycle riders and the lack of riding gear on some of them. This situation poses unique problems overseas, where security personnel have only limited off-base jurisdiction. For bases in the continental United States, a suggestion has arisen to get local law enforcement involved. Riders with stickers but no riding gear wouldn't be allowed to bring their bikes on base. Oh, yea!—



Dressing like this guy and letting the wind blow through your hair isn't an option for Sailors and Marines.

There's that leadership thing again.

So, the next time you have to fill out a supervisor's mishap report, draft a message about an injury or fatality, or visit someone at home or in the hospital about a motorcycle-crash victim, ask yourself who really was at fault. Was it you the leader, you the supervisor, or just you?

Wear your gear, ride safe, and keep the rubber-side down. 

The author was assigned to NSA Naples, Italy, when he wrote this article.


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